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Man v Nature: American Fears of the Environment

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American Fears of the Environment

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Introduction

A Review of the Literature

This study will analyze the variables and underlying reasons that influence the public's level of fear of environmental issues.

- Prior research credits ones political party affiliation and news exposure with being the best indicators of an individuals level of fear of environmental issues (McCright and Dunlap, 2010).
- From the start of the Environmental Movement in the 1980's Republicans have rejected climate change and aimed to debunk the scientific evidence.
- Democrats on the other hand have consistently fought for environmental justice.
- Research suggests that Democrats receive more exposure to news channels that acknowledges environmental issues, which further instills the parties beliefs on them and makes Democrats more fearful of all environmental issues than Republicans (DeNicola and Subramaniam, 2014).
- While political affiliation and news exposure play dominate roles in influencing ones level of fear of the environment, other variables, which have strong effects are often over looked.
 - What drives individuals to be more fearful of specific environmental issues?
 - Income, Education level, and, age must be examined to get a deeper understanding of individuals fear of environmental issues (Bohr, 2014).

When the economy is weak and unemployment is high and incomes are low there are negative effects on the level of concern for the environment the public feels (Bruelle, Carmichael, and Jenkins, 2012). People of higher social class status (higher education and income) are ultimately more concerned about the environment. Younger people have also been found be more concerned about the environment (Borh, 2014).

Acknowledgments

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Hypotheses and Methods

H1: The higher an individuals household income is the more fearful they will be of air pollution.

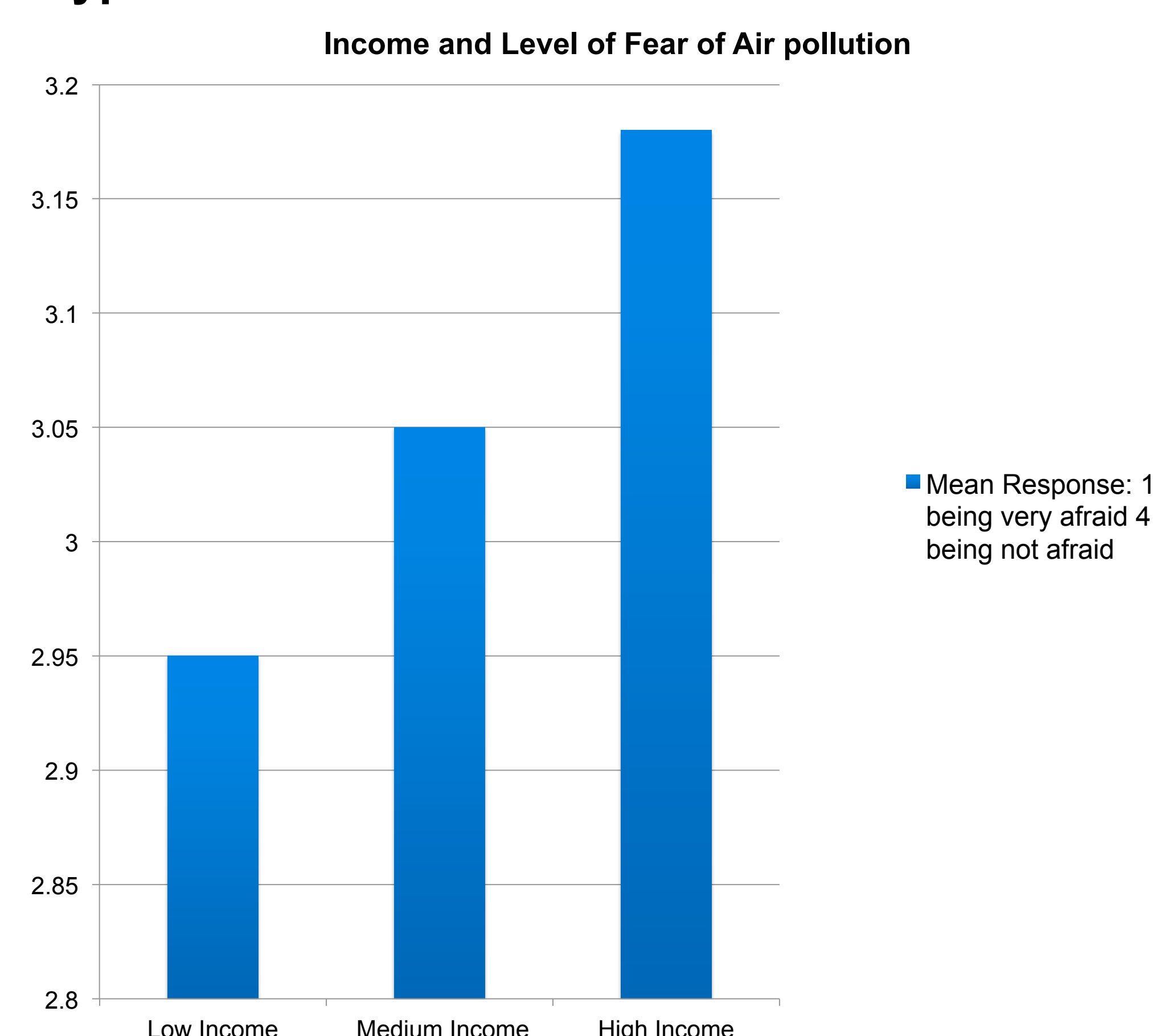
H2: Democrats are more fearful of ocean pollution than Republicans.

H3: The younger an individual is the more fearful they will be of global warming and climate change.

Using the Chapman Survey of American Fears data I was able test my hypothesizes by comparing means and running linear regressions!

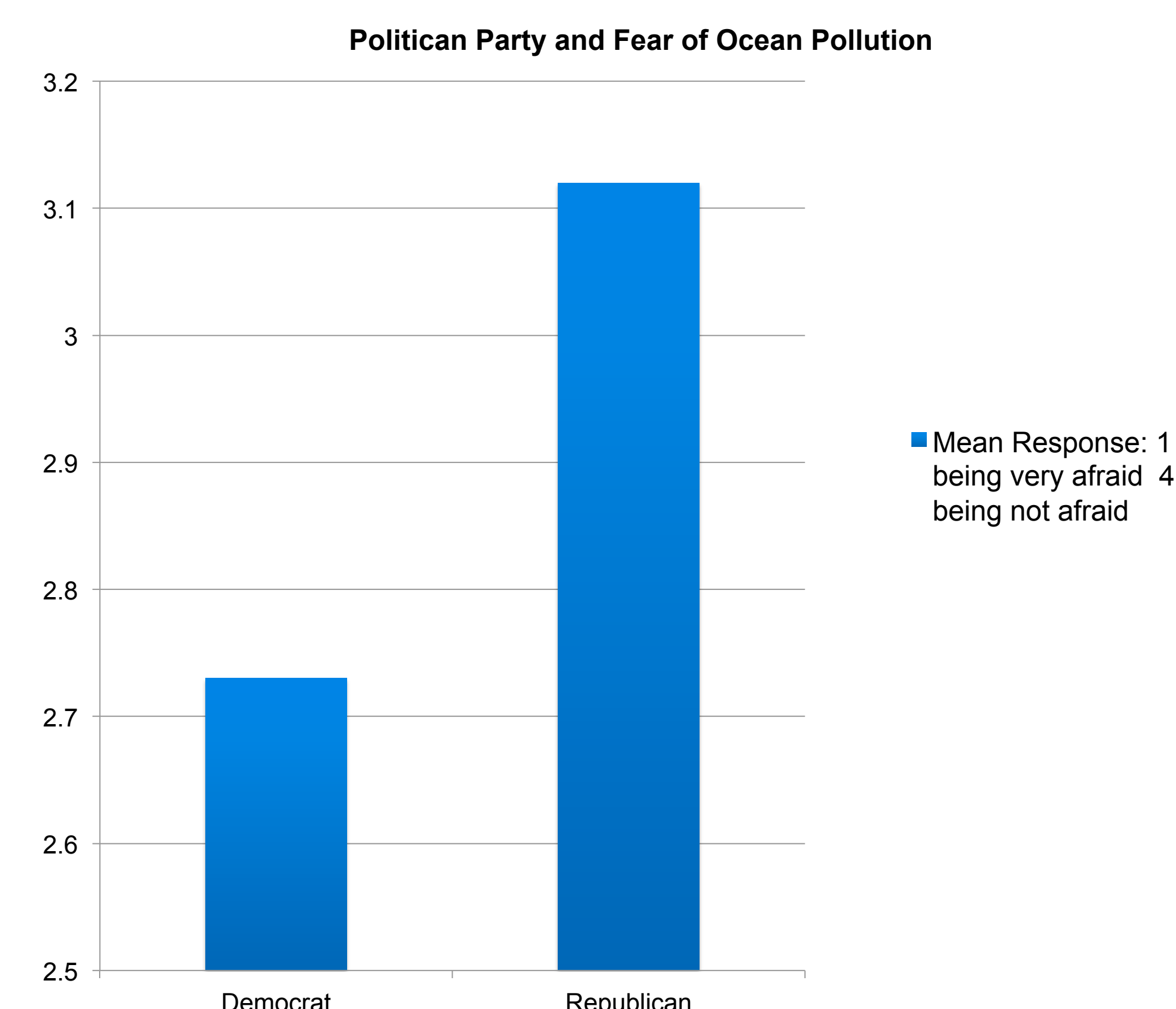
Results

Hypothesis 1



Through comparing means, it was revealed that individuals of higher income households are less afraid of air pollution than individuals of lower income households. with a p-value of 0.05 the data is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2



The comparison of means above shows that Democrats are more fearful of ocean pollution than Republicans are. The P-value .000 confirms the data is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 3

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.385	.114		29.598	.000
	Party three cats	-.412	.031	-.328	-13.381	.000
	[Watch the local TV news to learn about your area?] How often do you...?	.059	.016	.100	3.812	.000
	Age - 7 Categories	.048	.016	.079	3.006	.003

a. Dependent Variable: [Global warming and climate change] How afraid are you of the following environmental issues impacting your life?

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
			Square	
1	.345 ^a	.119	.118	.989

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age - 7 Categories, Party three cats, [Watch the local TV news to learn about your area?] How often do you...?

The regression shown above shows that although political party and news exposure were the most significant indicators of fear of global warming and climate change, age also has a strong effect. Additional regressions not pictured show that age is a stronger indicator than income and education level.

Conclusions

Hypothesis 1

The data gave me results that proved my hypothesis to be false, individuals of lower income are more fearful of air pollution than individuals of higher incomes. Although the literature I examined showed that wealthier individuals are more concerned about environmental issue, it did not consider the fact that lower income people tend to live in areas where environmental issues, such as air pollution and water pollution, are more common and more visible. The literature instead focused on the assumption that once one can afford their basic needs they can then become more concerned about issues like air pollution.

Hypothesis 2

The data confirmed my hypothesis that Democrats are more fearful of ocean water pollution then Republicans are. This hypothesis and the results that were delivered are consistent with what I expected to find according to the literature I analyzed.

Hypothesis 3

Age, which was interestingly enough found not to be statistically significant in indicating one's level of fear of air, drinking water, and ocean water pollution, was the only variable besides political party and media exposure to be a significant indicator of fear of global warming and climate change. Confirming my hypothesis that the younger an individual is more fear fearful of global warming and climate change they are likely to be.

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